and secondly, to this cap, reverse and eventually eliminate the diversion of PDS, SKO for adulteration. The pilot project is to be implemented in upto 10% of the block of the country for a period of six months. Thereafter, the working of the scheme would be independently assessed and, based on the experience gained, Government will consider scaling up the scheme to cover the entire country.

This scheme provides, *inter-alia*, for setting up of sub-wholesalers between the wholesalers and retailers with a view to strengthening the distribution network.

(b) The Karnataka State Government have *inter-alia* communicated that if this scheme is implemented, the extra sub-wholesale point would come into being and, as a result, commission and transportation charges would be an extra burden on the consumer. This would mean additional burden on the already inadequate supervisory machinery at the District/Taluk level. At present, PDS kerosene is being transported from oil company terminal to wholesale point and from wholesale to the retail outlets by the wholesalers, the cost which is built into the retail selling price. The appointment of sub-wholesalers would lead to creation of another level, which would add to the diversion. It would be better if the existing system in Karnataka is adopted and improved by entrusting the transportation of the kerosene oil to the companies right up to the retail points or, in other words, ensure delivery system for kerosene oil. This would result in savings in costs besides avoid diversion.

(c) The suggestions of the State Government are being examined.

Agreements on import of oil and gas

1698. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an agreement was signed between Oman and India in September, 1994 for the import of natural gas and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Iran and India in July, 1993 and thereafter in November, 1993 again;

(b) whether it is also a fact that an understanding has been reached again in 2005 between Iran and India for importing gas and the proposal exists for importing gas from Bangladesh and Myanmar also; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) "The record pertaining to the period mentioned in the Question is being verified and the information would be laid on the table of the House".

(b) and (c) Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Panchayati Raj visited Iran between the 11th and the 14th June 2005 at the invitation of the Minister of Petroleum of Iran to review the progress on import of natural gas from Iran both in the form of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) as well as through pipeline, as also other projects/proposals with a view to furthering hydrocarbon sector cooperation between the two countries.

During the visit, a Sale Purchase Agreement (SPA) for the purchase of 5 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) of LNG was signed between GAIL (India) Limited (GAIL)/Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)/Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and National Iranian Gas Export Company Limited (NIGEC) on the 13th June, 2005, in Tehran in the presence of the two Ministers.

On the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, a Heads of Agreement was signed between NIGEC and the Indian companies. The two sides agreed to constitute an India-Iran Special JWG to discuss the technical, financial, commercial, legal and related issues to realize a safe and secure world-class project. The first meeting of India-Iran Special JWG was held in New Delhi on 3rd & 4th August 2005. In this meeting it was *inter-alia* agreed that preliminary understanding of the preferred Project Structure would be reached by early November, 2005 and tripartite meeting would be held before 31st December, 2005 to finalize the framework Agreement.

As regards, importing gas from Myanmar, in January 2005, Minister (P&NG) participated in a trilateral Ministerial meeting between the Oil Ministers of Bangladesh, Myanmar and India. In pursuance of the trialateral Joint Press Statement released after that meeting, a Techno-Commercial Working Committee (TCWC) of the representatives of the three countries was constituted. The first Meeting of the TCWC was held in Yangon on 24-25 February 2005. The TCWC prepared a draft MoU to be signed by the three oil Ministers after the approval of their respective Governments. However, the approval of the MoU has been delayed on account of differences between India and Bangladesh over one preambular paragraph

in the draft MoU. Issues relating to the draft MoU continue to be under consideration of the Governments of Bangladesh and India even as India explores with Myanmar other options of importing natural gas into India from Myanmar.

Promotion of tourism industry in Assam

1699. SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for which the growth of Tourism Industry is tardy in Assam as compared to other States;

(b) whether it is a fact that the industry is not getting proper attention from the Centre; and

(c) if so, what is the Central Government's immediate target in boosting the industry and whether there will be any special budget allocation in the coming financial year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Development of tourism is the responsibility of the State Governments/U.Ts. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India provides financial assistance for creation of tourism-related infrastructure including tourism circuits and tourist destinations.

(b) and (c) Budget outlay of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is not allocated on State-wise basis but on the basis of projects submitted by the States that have been prioritized in consultation with the Centre and are complete in all respect. The Ministry has sanctioned financial assistance to the State of Assam during last three years, as under:—

Year	Amount Sanctioned
2002-03	Rs. 721.30 lakh
2003-04	Rs. 313.46 lakh
2004-05	Rs. 821.75 lakh